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WADING THROUGH THE SNOW

THE STORY OF MISS PINE-BOUGH

BY
A FRIEND OF THE FAMILY

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ON A certain day in February, twenty years ago, there was a great commotion in the modest home of Mr. Miyagawa, near Tokyo. Neighbors came wading through the snow on their high wooden clogs, and passed through the little gate and along the row of stepping-stones, bordered on either side by bamboo fences, that led to the tiny entrance porch. Here each visitor, instead of knocking, called out, "Excuse me, please!" At that, the paper sliding doors opened and a member of the family appeared, seated on the matted floor, and bowing until her head touched the mat. Greetings exchanged, a question was asked which, literally translated, would be, "Honorable child as for, male is it; female is it?"

With an air of apology, manifestly sincere, came the answer, "It is female."

Here followed many polite condolences from the neighbor. "Too bad! The first child, too, and her father is the eldest son! But perhaps the gods will

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be more gracious next time, and grant you a son!"

Sometimes a visitor, slipping off his clogs, went into the little parlor, bare of all furniture except the mats on the floor, a few cushions, a single picture-roll hanging in a recessed place of honor, and a brass brazier, like a jardiniere, containing a few coals. As he sat on the floor, warming his hands over the scanty fire and drinking tiny cups of tea, he continued to express his polite regrets at the misfortune which had come to the house, and his hope that the gods would be more propitious next time.

Meanwhile the cause of all the excitement was in the next room, separated from the garden, with its snow-covered pine trees, by only a row of paper sliding doors. She had been dressed in the brilliant yellow, scarlet and purple dresses proper for a girl baby, and was lying beside her mother on the floor in her bed of heavy comforters. Her father's mother was installed as absolute ruler over the baby and her mother, as became her position in her own household.

It was a restful room, as bare of furniture as the parlor, but with a tea-kettle singing on the brazier. Just behind the bed, however, a row of chests of drawers had been built into the room, even with the wall. Above their shining, red-lacquered front there was a long recess, forming a kind of shelf. Here stood numerous wooden tablets, each inscribed with

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the name of a dead relative of the family. With them was the row of household gods, looking down at mother and baby with their ugly expressions of ferocious cruelty or of cruel indifference.

Some days had passed, and the baby was seven days old. It was time for her to have a name. In



THEIR EXPRESSIONS OF FEROCIOUS CRUELTY

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consultation with his parents, her father had selected that of Matsue. This made her name Miyagawa Matsue, and to the world she would henceforth be known as Miyagawa Matsue San, or Temple-River Pine-Bough Miss. On this lucky seventh day this name was written out, and with great ceremony it was presented to the row of ancestral tablets on the god-shelf, thus announcing to the glorified spirits of the ancestors the arrival of a new member of the family.

On her twenty-first day, little Miss Pine-Bough had her first journey. Dressed in her gayest dress, a wadded kimono, with large scarlet peonies on a purple ground, she was tied to the back of a little



A SHINTO SHRINE

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nurse-girl. A heavy wadded kimono was put over both baby and girl, and, with the father and some of the family, they went through the muddy village streets to the temple. Here they presented the baby before the gods, and announced with due ceremony that the temple had now gained another worshipper.

On the hundredth day, there was a gathering of relatives and friends at the Miyagawa home. Each guest brought a present, usually either a fish or a piece of bright cloth for the baby. With all due solemnity, little Matsue San was given her first solid food, three grains of rice from her grandmother's chop-sticks. Then the company feasted on red rice, so called because cooked with red beans, to give it the lucky red color.

The first six years of little Matsue San's life passed quickly enough in the little matted house or under the pine trees in the garden. She played quietly with her dolls, carrying them on her back as she had been carried when a baby. She learned to sit properly on the floor, her feet crossed behind her, and her little kimono perfectly straight and smooth over her knees. She learned, too, how to make a polite bow, putting her hands to the floor and bending until her forehead almost touched him. Continually she was trained in obedience to her father, to her grandmother, and to the little brother who had come a year after her birth. Every day she helped her mother to put the

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PLAYING WITH HER DOLL

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offerings on the god-shelf, and every day she went through the formulas of worshipping the gods and the ancestors. One more ancestral tablet had been put on the god-shelf. The old grandfather was dead, and little Miss Pine-Bough's father was now the head of the family, the holder of the family property and the ruler of its members.

He was a stern descendant of the ancient soldier class, the samurai, the finest product of Old Japan. In the world of modern ideas, unfolding all around him, he held fast the ancient code of the samurai. For him, the twin virtues were courage and loyalty, with loyalty as the greater of the two. Above all things, he must be loyal, he believed; loyal to his Emperor, to his feudal superior and to his ancestors. Whatever interfered with this loyalty was wrong; whatever loyalty required was right. If the service of his lord should require plotting and lying, that plotting and lying became a virtue. If it should require the sacrifice of his whole family, that also was right. If it should demand the selling of his little daughter into slavery, that would not be wrong. If it needed the sacrifice of his own life, suicide became the height of heroism. Without the great ability of General Nogi, he had the same spirit which, last summer, made the old general take his own life, that he might follow his Emperor into the land of spirits.

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IN THE CLASS ROOM



A DRILL IN CALISTHENICS

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Matsue San's mother served her stoical husband with the submission due from a model wife. Even the grandmother seldom opposed him, and the little daughter never thought of such a thing as gainsaying her stern father. Yet he was fond of the pretty little girl in his peculiar way, and she knew it, and preferred her father to all the rest of the family.

It is the law in Japan that all children must attend the public schools, and no others, for at least six years. Accordingly, when she was six years old, little Miss Pine-Bough, with about sixty other children of her age, entered the public school of their town. During the next eight years she learned to read and write the four to six thousand Chinese characters necessary for the comprehension of ordinary Japanese books. She learned something about arithmetic and geography, a little sewing, singing and gymnastics, and a great deal of drawing.

But above all, she was trained in manners and morals. For her these consisted in the two womanly virtues of politeness and obedience, already inculcated at home, with the addition of what to her was the worship of the Emperor. On every national holiday and every other great occasion, the picture of the Emperor was brought in state from its place in the fireproof storehouse in the school-yard, and teachers and pupils alike bowed before it. On the frequent occasions, when the Emperor's rescript on education

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was read before them, the children learned to stand with heads bowed in reverence. Not a head must be lifted until the venerated object had been carried with all due ceremony from the rostrum back to the storehouse.

Matsue San soon learned the story of that fireproof building, that looked like a little shrine. Before she entered school there had been a great fire, which destroyed the school-house. The most sacred possession of the school, the Emperor's picture, was then kept in the school-house itself. It was the janitor's duty to save this picture before anything else, but the roof fell in before he could gain his object. In despair at his disgrace, he killed himself. This saved his good name; he was praised by everybody, and his family were given enough money to make them comfortable for years. When the school-house was rebuilt, this fireproof shrine was added to it to hold the new picture which the sacred Emperor himself presented to the school. Matsue San and her mates were proud of their school hero, and looked on the little shrine with childish awe.

With awe, too, and the ready faith of childhood, they listened to the old stories of their history teachers. They learned how, many centuries ago, the offspring of the great goddess of the sun came down to earth, and, conquering all who opposed him, became the first Emperor of Japan. They were taught that all

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their long line of Emperors were descended from this same divine ancestor. They learned that the Japanese were a "chosen people," a nation under the direct protection of the gods, and especially cared for by all the imperial ancestors. Girls as well as boys learned that above all other beings stands the Emperor of Japan, and that to die for him is the greatest of all honors.

Little Miss Pine-Bough was half-way through her course at school before she came into contact with the new force in Japanese life. One day some of her schoolmates told her about another school which they were attending on their weekly holiday, Sunday. The next Sunday she, too, went with them to a small



AT SUNDAY SCHOOL

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Japanese house, where a crowd of children were being welcomed by two young women. The two wore the pleated skirts, such as the public school teachers and a few of the elder school girls were wearing, the uniform recently adopted for all teachers and students.

It was a strange hour for Matsue San as, with all her keen senses alert, she imitated what her friends were doing. With head bowed to the floor she listened to somebody talking in most intimate fashion to some superior person, evidently one of the gods. She heard all the children repeat in chorus a petition to this same being, whom they addressed as "Father." When she raised her head, she looked around for the god-shelf and the offerings. Nothing was there but a picture of the kindest-faced man she had ever seen, surrounded by children and holding one in his arms.

One of the blue-skirted teachers began to play on a baby organ, such as Matsue San had often seen in her own school, but in a very different way from her teachers, who picked out their tunes one note at a time, while this wonderful girl played with both hands upon three or four keys at once. As Matsue San was gazing in wonder, the children began to sing a song about a person she had never heard about, whom they called "My Lord Jesu." With the full power of sixty pairs of lungs, they shouted the refrain after each verse, "My Lord Jesu loves me." Matsue San had never before heard of a superior being, a god,

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such as this person evidently was, who could condescend to love a child. She knew all about fearing the gods, serving them and sacrificing to them, but the idea that a great god would actually, without any offerings, love and help such an insignificant creature as a girl child, was quite new and astonishing to her. She listened to the teacher's lesson, not understanding much, but with the strong desire to come again.

From that time on she went more or less regularly to the little house, her father making no special objection, because he considered the whole proceeding a harmless diversion. Once, indeed, the little Sunday-school was broken up for several months by the principal of the public school, who forbade his pupils going to a place where such disloyal, unpatriotic teaching was being given. However, on his leaving for a better position, the new principal, being either liberal-minded or indifferent, said nothing on the subject. The Sunday-school was reopened, and Matsue San attended as before.

Meanwhile, the little girl was developing a very bright, inquisitive mind. When the great Commencement Day arrived, it was she who won the honor of making the response to the congratulatory speeches of all the dignitaries of the town. That meant that she was graduating at the head of her class. A proud little girl she was as, in all the glory of a bright new

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dress and a new skirt like those of the teachers, she walked demurely up before the dignitaries, made her bow at precisely the correct angle and read her little speech, full of hard Chinese words, in precisely the correct style of mournful monotone.

That evening, she summoned all her courage to make a request of her father. Bowing before him until her head touched the floor, she told her wish in the humblest terms. She wished to go to high school.

Many boys from the town were then attending boys' high schools in Tokyo, going back and forth on the train every day. Two or three girls were in boarding-schools. Mr. Miyagawa was not a poor man, and could afford to send his daughter. He was proud of this bright, attractive little girl, too,



GIRLS' NORMAL SCHOOL BUILDING

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although it was inconsistent with paternal dignity to show it. Also, he knew that high school training for girls was becoming popular, and that a high school graduate had a better opportunity to marry well than a girl without this education. He promised to send Matsue San to one of the government high schools for girls, in Tokyo. But the child had still another humble request to make. Would not her honorable father graciously permit her to enter the —— Girls' School?

This was the school in Tokyo from which her Sunday-school teachers came every Sunday. At first, Mr. Miyagawa refused positively to send his daughter to a school which taught a foreign religion, and which was managed in part by foreigners. He thought such a course would be unpatriotic and even disloyal to his Emperor. On investigation, however, he found that the mission school had one advantage over the government school so important that it overcame all his objections. Every Japanese who aspires to culture wishes to learn the English language, and the mission school, with its five or six American teachers, could teach English far better than any government school with Japanese teachers only. Foreign music, too, was becoming fashionable, and he found out that this also was taught better in the mission school. He gave his consent and in April, with thirty or forty other freshmen, little Miss Pine-Bough came

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into the dormitory of her new school.

She was afraid of those American teachers at first. They were so tall; they strode about like men, instead of taking graceful, shuffling, 6-inch steps; some of them had curly hair, which meant a very bad disposition; some even had terrible round, blue eyes, like the pictures of dragons or of Japanese devils; and they all had such big noses! One little freshman from the country, on first meeting an American teacher, burst into tears at the sight of such a monster, and



THE DRAGON

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had to be taken away and consoled by the Japanese class teacher. However, the new girls soon learned that the "monsters" meant well. A series of violent attacks of hero-worship succeeded the first shyness and fear. Almost every child had one teacher whom she thought absolutely perfect, and to whom she gave all the loyal devotion her father would have given his feudal superior. Matsue San, too, had her favorite teacher, and showed her devotion in every way she could, from quarreling with every classmate who did not agree with her that Miss Burns was the most wonderful teacher in school, down to imitating her handwriting so perfectly that Miss Burns herself could not tell her own writing from that of her pupil.

During the five years in high school, Matsue San continued her studies in Chinese characters and in Japanese history, language and literature. Her new studies, however, introduced her to another world. Very soon the English work, for which she had come, put her into the midst of the child life, the home life, the feelings and ideals of a people quite different from any she had known. Her work in science undermined her old superstitions. In the history courses, she learned how many ancient nations had had stories and beliefs like those she had learned at home and in the public school. Gradually she learned how the great nations have outgrown such crude ideas.

While such studies were taking from her her old

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beliefs, she was gaining something better to replace them. Every day, in her Bible class, she was being taught positive Christianity, and she was associating constantly with other girls who were Christians. In her third year, she, too, applied for baptism. Her father, probably regarding it as one of the school ceremonies, made no objection. Immediately after her baptism, she asked for the privilege of teaching in one of the numerous Sunday-schools connected with her school. She did this work well, her brightness being very attractive to the children. She became a prominent figure in her class and in the school, being president of her class and of her literary society, and an officer in the school Young Women's Christian



Y. W. C. A. SUMMER CONFERENCE

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Association. She finished her course, the second in her class.

Just at this time Miss Burns needed a helper to assist her with school work, calling, study, correspondence and the other multitudinous duties of a missionary teacher in a foreign country. Matsue San took the position and, with her old friendship for Miss Burns and her alert intelligence, made a valuable helper. Naturally the two were associated constantly in their work and, when there was time, Matsue San told her teacher the details of her past life and her present plans and hopes with a frankness unusual among school girls.

This pleasant association had continued for two or three months when, one morning, Matsue San appeared at her teacher's home with a most doleful countenance and asked permission to go home for the day, as her father wished to see her.

"Of course, you may go," said Miss Burns, "but is there anything wrong at home?"

"No-o," was the embarrassed reply. "No, nothing very important."

She seemed so distressed that Miss Burns asked no more questions, knowing that the trouble would be sure to come out sooner or later. In the evening Miss Pine-Bough returned, with her face all smiles, and reported that all was well. In the course of two or three weeks the same incident was repeated,

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and then Miss Burns learned the cause of all the strange symptoms.

The fate of all Japanese girls was coming close to little Miss Pine-Bough. Performing the duty of a good Japanese father, Mr. Miyagawa was looking around for a suitable husband for her. His go-between was conferring with the go-betweens of families with marriageable sons. Matsue San was well educated and very attractive. The proposals had begun to come. The ordinary Japanese father of the old school would have selected the man he regarded as most eligible, probably one whom his daughter had never seen. Having made all the arrangements, he would have announced his decision to her; she would have bowed before him and accepted the decision with thanks and, in due time, the marriage would have taken place. Despite his sternness, however, Mr. Miyagawa's pride in his daughter was making him indulgent. He summoned her home and gave her the great privilege of being consulted in the matter.

Matsue San did not wish to marry yet. Especially, she did not wish to marry any man she had never seen. Although her ancestresses for generations had submitted, although no girl in her family had ever been known to object to such a marriage, Matsue San was not content. In the most humble way, she coaxed her father to give up the first match.

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It was not especially desirable, anyway, and he consented. She coaxed him to give up the second also.

For more than a year the proposals kept coming, sometimes once, sometimes two or three times a month. Each time, in some mysterious way, the demure little daughter managed to prevail upon her father to send a refusal to the go-betweens. Each time, however, her task grew more difficult. She was growing old; she was twenty. It was time for her to be married. Mr. Miyagawa's friends were beginning to talk about how he was neglecting his paternal duty.

Meanwhile it was time for Miss Burns to have her furlough in America. Through her recommendation Matsue San had been appointed to a good position as a tutor in the high school. Her father had not refused his consent. Matsue San was happily preparing for her new duties, and helping Miss Burns when she could. The bustle of preparation, the moving and storing of furniture, the packing of trunks and boxes, was taking all the time Miss Burns could spare between callers. All her Japanese acquaintances, according to their custom, were making parting calls and bringing parting gifts. She was not thinking much about Matsue San's affairs.

One afternoon, when Matsue San was away, Mr. Miyagawa appeared at the home of Miss Burns, bringing his parting gift. In the polished phrases of old-fashioned Japanese politeness he made a long

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speech, thanking the "honorable teacher" for her long-continued kindness to his "foolish daughter," and asking her to accept "this poor, unworthy token of remembrance." Then in another long speech, he dwelt upon the great condescension of the school authorities in accepting the services of such an altogether incompetent person as this same foolish daughter and, with many polite bows, he informed Miss Burns that he had resolved to spare them further annoyance and had obtained another place for her. In plain terms, he had formed an engagement for her and the marriage was to take place in a few months.

Alice Burns was amazed. She had had sufficient training in Japanese politeness, however, to answer the speeches in kind, praising Matsue San and regretting that her valuable services were to be lost to the high school. The interview soon ended with the usual bows and polite phrases.

The next time she met Matsue San, she said, "Well, Matsue San, I see I must offer my congratulations."

Matsue San looked puzzled.

"Congratulations? Why?"

"Why, I hear you are to be married."

"Wha-a-t?"

Her eyes grew big, and she almost forgot to be polite as she burst out, "That's the first I've heard

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about it!"

Somehow Alice had never thought of the possibility of Matsue San being ignorant of the whole affair. Dropping her bantering tone, she said, "Go home to-day and talk with your father about it."

Matsue San went. When she returned, her usual bright expression had given place to one of abject despair. The news was true. Tired of being coaxed out of matches, her father had called together the family council. They had decided upon a husband for her, a Buddhist, a man she had never seen nor heard of before that time. The agreements were already made. The first presents had been exchanged. Everything was firmly settled; but she felt that she could not possibly consent. What was to be done?

The days were rushing by. Miss Burns seldom had a free moment. There were all the farewell calls to be returned, and farewell meetings to attend and speeches to make. But, whenever there was an opportunity, there was a conference with Matsue San. Every phase of the whole situation was gone over carefully, more than once.

"What would happen if you simply refused to do it?" the teacher asked. She knew about what the reply would be. The daughter would be disowned, and would become an outcast, with no recognized place in society, and no friends except some of

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the Christians. Alice knew, too, the injury which such an open defiance of Japanese conventions by one of its graduates would do to the reputation of the school.

One day, Matsue San said, "Miss Burns, tell me, what shall I do? I will do whatever you say. If you say to refuse, I will do it."

Alice Burns knew that she would carry out her promise. She thought a long time. She thought of all those generations of ancestresses, whose only ideal had been obedience. She thought of the dependent nature of the Japanese girl. She thought of all the early training and teaching this girl had had. Could Matsue San break with all this? Would she be happy, even if she could break with it? Would her defiance do any good in the end? Could she hold out a whole lifetime? No; Alice could not say to her, "Defy your family."

But she was a freeborn American woman. She could not say to this girl, shrinking as she herself would shrink from marriage with this man whom she had never seen, "Consent, and marry this stranger." At last she said, slowly, "Matsue San, you know just what an American girl would do in your place. But you are a Japanese girl, and you must live your life in Japan. You must decide your life for yourself. I cannot do it for you."

The next day Alice started on her long journey

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homeward. She went by a roundabout way, stopping in several countries. At each stopping place she looked for a letter from Matsue San, who had all of her addresses. None came. She reached her home at last, and found numerous letters from Japan waiting for her. There was none from Matsue San. She decided that the girl must have submitted, and that her grief and despair were so great that she could not bear to write.

After several weeks, there came a long letter from Matsue San. Alice tore it open eagerly, and began to decipher the Japanese writing. First, there were several pages devoted to a full account of the death and the funeral of the late Emperor of Japan. Alice hurried over them as quickly as she could. Then followed all the news about her acquaintances and the school. Alice paid scant attention to them. Finally came the welcome words, "Now I will introduce my own unworthy affairs." In terms most polite and respectful to them, Matsue San intimated that she had worked on the family council and on her father all summer; that finally, she had succeeded in altering their unalterable decision, and that they had at last consented to give up the marriage. However, it was only on the condition that, among the other suitors for her hand, she herself should choose one at once, and promise to marry him very soon.

She added that she had done so; that the young

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man was a Christian, and that she had seen him often at their church; that he was a brother of one of her friends in the high school, and that she had heard a great deal about him; and in short, that she really believed she liked him!

Alice was jubilant. She knew the misery that would almost inevitably have been Matsue San's lot had she, a Christian and an educated girl, gone into that Buddhist household, to be ruled to the minutest detail by a Buddhist family, and probably by a tyrannical mother-in-law. She knew that Matsue San's Christianity would have been buried, denied all outward manifestation; that all her finer instincts would have been suppressed; that even in the rearing of her own children she could have had almost nothing to say. Even if there had been no physical cruelty, she knew the years of mental anguish her pupil and friend must have suffered.

Instead of this, there was the certainty of complete liberty, sympathy and help in her Christian life; the power to bring up her children in her faith; the right to be to her husband a helpmeet instead of a servant or a pretty toy, the consideration of a Christian man for a Christian wife. And, more than any individual happiness, the news meant the beginning of one more center of all good influences, one more mighty power for righteousness, one more Christian home in the beautiful and well-loved country of Japan.

